

City of Derby Fire Department

Commissioner Kelly Curtis

Chief Tomas Lenart Jr.

Assistant Chief Kurt Nemesis

Assistant Chief Michael Goodman

Assistant Chief Robert Laskowski

Proposed H.B. No. 5278

An Act Authorizing Firefighters to Conduct Charitable Fundraising Boot Drives on State Highways

Public Safety and Security Committee
Public Hearing

February 7, 2013

Comments Addressed to "Chair" and Members of the Committee.

My name is Gary M. Parker, Past Chief of the City of Derby Fire Department. I am here today to present testimony in support of H.B. Number 5278; An Act Authorizing Firefighters to Conduct Charitable Fundraising Boot Drives on State Highways.

This presentation is made on behalf of the Officers and Members of the Derby Fire Department and as such, I respectfully request this committee to report favorably for the proposed H.B. 5278.

It is the understanding of the Derby Fire Department permitted operations allowed under the proposed bill will exclude all boot drive operations on limited access highways, a reasonable limitation to be accepted without exception.

Rte 34 is a major connector route connecting the I-91/I-95 corridor in New Haven to I-84 in Newtown. Rte 8, a major limited access north/south highway crosses over Rte 34 in the center of our city. To be clear, Boot Drives have been conducted by the Derby Fire Department along State Rte 34 for nearly three decades without incident. Each drive was conducted only after close coordination between the Derby Police Department and the Derby Fire Department establishing the date, hours of operation, acceptable weather conditions and vigilant monitoring of traffic conditions by both agencies. It was only in 2010, the department received notification from the Connecticut Department of Transportation of a prohibition of boot drives in force along state highways. No drives have been conducted since. To repeat, until that time and for nearly three decades prior, no issues were reported to the department regarding this matter. This is attributed to the limitation of Department Boot Drive operations to one of two intersections controlled with existing traffic signals and coordinating the actual fill the boot operations with the automatic cycles of the lights.

Although it is the firefighters listed in the title of this proposed bill, the true benefactors of this act will be the countless individual and group recipients who will benefit with the benevolence generated as a result of it. Additionally, proceeds have been directed to assist fire department members and families of members in distress due to extreme cases of injury or illness. This has been found to be a very effective means in the never-ending task of recruitment and retention of a highly qualified, very dedicated and always available membership.

To conclude, I feel compelled to make the following point. The tradition of the fire service is to protect life and property in that order. Typically our call to service requires response of our resources to remedy a bad situation to make it good. In most cases, we can accomplish that task with hoses, hurst tools and ladders, but sometimes it takes more of a response without the lights, without the sirens. What it takes is the ability to deliver benevolence and that is what we ask you for assistance with today.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gary M. Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Parker".

Gary M. Parker, Past Chief
Derby Fire Department